

REMARKS

Claims 1-33 were pending in this application when the present Office Action was mailed (August 24, 2005). Claims 1 and 19 have been amended to clarify certain aspects of these claims. Accordingly, claims 1-33 remain pending in the application.

In the non-final Office Action mailed August 24, 2005, claims 1-33 were rejected. More specifically, the status of the application in light of the August 24 Office Action is as follows:

(A) Claims 1, 2, 4-11, 19, 21, and 22 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 1,756,747 to Holland ("Holland"); and

(B) Claims 3, 12-18, 20, and 23-33 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Holland in view of U.S. Patent No. 3,939,988 to Wellman ("Wellman") and U.S. Patent No. 3,268,090 to Wirkkala ("Wirkkala").

The undersigned attorney wishes to thank the Examiner for engaging in a telephone conference on November 17, 2005 to discuss the present Office Action, the applied references, and the pending claims. The following remarks summarize and expand upon the results of the November 17 telephone conference, and they also reflect the agreements reached between the undersigned attorney and the Examiner during the telephone conference. For example, the following remarks reflect the Examiner's acknowledgement that amending claim 1 to clarify that the first and second portions of the support member are axially extendable relative to each other would distinguish the claim over Holland. Claim 1 has been so amended and, accordingly, the Section 102 rejection of claim 1 should be withdrawn.

A. Response to the Section 102 Rejection of Claims 1, 2, 4-11, 19, 21, and 22

Claims 1, 2, 4-11, 19, 21, and 22 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Holland. As stated above, the Examiner acknowledged during the November 17 telephone conference that Holland cannot support a Section 102

rejection of independent claim 1. Therefore, the rejection of this claim should be withdrawn.

Claims 2 and 4-11 depend from base claim 1. As discussed above, claim 1 is allowable. Therefore, claims 2 and 4-11 are allowable as depending from claim 1, and also because of the additional features of these dependent claims. Accordingly, the Section 102 rejection of claims 2 and 4-11 should be withdrawn.

Independent claim 19 has been amended in a manner generally similar to that described above with reference to claim 1. Accordingly, the Section 102 rejection of claim 19 should be withdrawn. Claims 21 and 22 depend from base claim 19. Accordingly, the Section 102 rejection of these dependent claims should be withdrawn for the foregoing reasons, and for the additional features of these dependent claims.

B. Response to the Section 103 Rejection of Claims 3, 12-18, 20, and 23-33


Claims 3, 12-18, 20, and 23-33 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Holland in view of Wellman and Wirkkala. During the November 17 telephone conference, the Examiner acknowledged that the applied references cannot support a Section 103 rejection of these claims. In light of this agreement, the Section 103 rejection of claims 3, 12-18, 20, and 23-33 should be withdrawn.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, the claims pending in the application comply with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. § 112 and are patentable over the applied art. The applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the application and a mailing of a Notice of Allowance. If the Examiner has any questions or believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is encouraged to call the undersigned at (206) 359-3982.

Respectfully submitted,
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